

program at Austin High School in 1992. He was so impressed by the effectiveness of this program he joined the CIS Board of Directors in 1994, and he and his wife, Linda, underwrote the CIS program at Key Middle School from 1997 to 2000. The CIS Dropout Prevention Program provides children with needed school supplies, tutoring, family counseling or assistance, or a safe haven during the after-school hours. During the 1999–2000 school year, 74 Houston area schools participated in the CIS program and served nearly 29,000 at-risk children. These students had a 98 percent graduation rate, a 98 percent stay in school rate, and 80 percent saw a marked improvement in academics, behavior, and/or attendance.

Ronny Finger was also a dedicated and valuable member of the Museum of Natural Science Society, Houston Symphony Society, Anti-Defamation League, Houston Women's Area Center, and the Salvation Army. And, he was a dear friend to my family and me. Mr. Speaker, I honor the memory of Ronny Finger. He is missed, but his commitment to our youth and community live on as a tribute to his life.

REVEREND HOWARD'S HISTORIC ROLE AT BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, October 29, 2000

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, today—Sunday October 29th—marks a very special occasion at the historic Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey, with the conclusion of a three-day installation celebration for the new pastor, The Reverend Dr. M. William Howard, Jr. I was pleased to be among the many well-wishers who attended the solemn morning worship service to officially welcome Reverend Howard, under whose dynamic leadership Bethany Baptist will continue to flourish and to reach even greater heights.

Bethany Baptist, the oldest African American Baptist Church in Newark, was founded in 1871. Underscoring the church's strong emphasis on community involvement and cultural commitment, the building itself was designed to resemble an African hut. Ministries of the church include a senior citizen center, AIDS ministry, hospice program, computer literacy program, prison ministry, race track ministry for jockeys, a farmer's market, support for foster children, and missionaries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Reverend Howard served as President of New York Theological Seminary, a graduate school of theology committed to increasing the capacity of church workers as they strive to make a positive difference in their congregations and their communities, from 1992 to 2000. In recognition of his work, the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations named NYTS the recipient of its Award for Excellence for the year 2000. Prior to assuming the presidency at NYTS, Rev. Howard was for 20 years a member of the national staff of America's oldest Protestant denomination—The Reformed Church in America. He also served as moderator of the World Council of Churches/Programme to Combat Racism, President of the National Council of Churches, and President

of the American Committee on Africa. An activist for social justice at home and abroad, Reverend Howard was a leading participant in the movement against apartheid in South Africa for two decades. His strong moral stand prompted the former apartheid government to deny him a visa to visit South Africa. When Nelson Mandela made his first visit to the U.S., Reverend Howard chaired the committee which organized the interfaith worship service at the Riverside Church at which Mr. Mandela was welcomed to New York. In 1979, during the hostage crisis in Iran, Dr. Howard conducted Christmas worship for Americans being held captive at the U.S. embassy, and in 1984, he chaired the delegation which along with the Reverend Jesse Jackson succeeded in obtaining release of a U.S. Navy pilot being held prisoner in Syria after having been shot down during a bombing mission over Lebanon. His work has taken him to Cuba, the former Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Central America and the Middle East.

Reverend Howard, a native of Americus, Georgia, is a graduate of Morehouse College and Princeton Theological Seminary. He holds several honorary degrees, keys to cities and awards from many organizations. A member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and the Council of Foreign Relations, he has served as Secretary of the Association of Theological Schools, a member of the New York City Board of the Enterprise Foundation, and a commissioner of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues in Congress join me in congratulating Reverend Howard and his wife Barbara Jean, who are the parents of three children, as he officially assumes this new leadership role at the historic Bethany Baptist Church.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, October 29, 2000

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 573, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay".

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BELARUSAN-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, October 29, 2000

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Belarusian-American Foundation on the auspicious occasion of its 50th anniversary. I am very proud of the fact that Central New Jersey is home to a significant Belarusian-American community. I happen to be very close to one particular member of the Belarusian-American community in this area: my wife, Sarah.

While we are here to celebrate, we must also recognize that Belarus has not made the successful transition to democracy like Poland, Slovakia, and as recently as this month, Serbia. Over nearly a decade of independence,

the promise of democracy, freedom of expression and association, and the flowering of a national identity have not come to pass for the Belarusian people. The fault for this sad state of affairs rests, as all of us know, with President Aleksandr Lukashenka. The President has illegally extended his term of office beyond the legally mandated expiration date. Throughout his tenure, President Lukashenka has monopolized the mass media, undermined the constitutional foundation for the separation of powers, used intimidation and strong-arm tactics against the political opposition, suppressed freedom of the press and expression, defamed the national culture, maligned the national language and eroded Belarus's rightful position as a sovereign nation.

Worse, just two days before the Parliamentary elections held on October 15, President Lukashenka issued a fresh denunciation of market reforms. And, I am disappointed and disturbed that the Parliamentary elections almost exclusively involved candidates who back Lukashenka. Clearly, not a single OSCE condition for free and fair elections was met. This past week, Representatives GEJDENSON and SMITH introduced a Resolution condemning the October 15 elections. I will try to ensure that this bill reaches the House floor in the remaining days of this Congress. And today, I again express my strong condemnation of these "sham" elections.

For at least four years, I and other Members of Congress have been working to address Lukashenka's abuses of power. In 1996, I introduced a Resolution expressing concern over the Lukashenka regime's violations of human and civil rights in direct violation of the Helsinki Accords and the constitution of Belarus, and expressing concern about the union between Russia and Belarus. That Resolution also recognized March 25 as the anniversary of the declaration of an independent Belarusian state. A year later, I worked with leaders of the International Relations Committee to include language in the State Department Authorization bill, which passed the House, calling for our President to press the Government of President Lukashenka on defending the sovereignty of Belarus and guaranteeing basic freedoms and human rights.

For years now, the Belarusian-American community has been trying to inform the American people about the truth in Belarus, that President Lukashenka's actions do not have widespread support and his regime has lost any sense of legitimacy it once may have had. I want to thank the Belarusian-American community in New Jersey and throughout the nation for continuing to speak the truth about events in the land of their ancestors.

Earlier this year, I joined Congressman GEJDENSON and others in introducing yet another Resolution that condemns the continued egregious violations of human rights in the Republic of Belarus, and the lack of progress toward the establishment of democracy and the rule of law in Belarus to continue to put pressure on Lukashenka. The Resolution also calls on President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's regime to engage in negotiations with the representatives of the opposition and to restore the constitutional rights of the Belarusian people, and